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ABSTRACT

Work requirements for welfare recipients will pressure state agencies to create employment opportunities for parents and arrangements for child care while parents work. This report examines the topic of recruiting welfare mothers to care for children of other recipients. The report highlights research outlining barriers to work in child care and concerns regarding low-income women as child caregivers. It also profiles programs that have met with varying degrees of success, discusses center-based training as an option, and suggests supports for family child care providers. Child care workfare proposals are described as varying in the amount of training, support, and screening offered to providers and options offered to parents. Caregiving issues discussed include the desire and aptitude for child care work, family supports for providers, and the providers' professionalism and relationship with parents. The report also describes barriers and disincentives to child care as a work opportunity, including low compensation, lack of resources to support providers, impediments related to small business operations, health and safety conditions of homes, inability to pass background checks, zoning and landlords, and the presence of domestic violence. The report recommends effective supports for providers, including adequate training, start-up funds, development of a family child care provider network, opportunities for licensing or regulation, links to referral and social services, financial support as needed, and assistance to market business and develop curriculum, policies, and procedures. (Contains 17 references). (Author/KB)

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Working For Change

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HARVEY FINKLE, IMPACT VISUALS

*Issue topic*

# Recruiting Welfare Recipients for Child Care Work: *Not a Panacea*

**Whether by federal mandate** or state initiative, welfare policy is facing a dramatic shift toward requiring even mothers of very young children to work. These work requirements for public assistance recipients will place enormous pressure on state agencies to create both employment opportunities for parents and arrangements for care of their children while they work. The idea of recruiting welfare mothers to care for the children of other recipients thus sounds appealingly convenient and cost efficient, as it would expand the supply of child care and simultaneously provide a work activity for welfare recipients. In fact, the welfare reform bill passed by the Senate in September of 1995 explicitly allows states to count care for recipients' children, even unpaid child care, as an approved work activity in order to receive benefits.

This idea understandably generates controversy, as it conjures up notions of a child care underclass, devoid of hard-won safety protections for children in child care and basic employment assurances for providers. Nonetheless, some states have already developed programs to create such arrangements and inevitably, more states will.

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In this issue of our *Working For Change* series, we attempt to respond to this idea which has sparked such enormous interest and concern. We have highlighted some of the current research, which raises general issues and barriers to work in the child care field, as well as concerns particular to recruitment of low-income women to work in family child care. We have profiled several programs that have met with varying degrees of success, which may be instructive as states consider similar ideas. Finally, we briefly discuss center-based training as another option and suggest the baseline supports that should be offered to providers who are recruited to work in family child care. As this type of proposal is considered, it is important to become fully informed about the potential pitfalls and solicit the assistance and input of the state or local child care community as part of the process.

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## WHAT ARE STATES PROPOSING?

The types of "child care as workfare" proposals emerging in states vary greatly in the amount of training, support, and screening offered to potential providers and choice offered to parents. The notion of recruiting public assistance recipients to work in child care is not a new one. Child care work has always been an option for welfare recipients as part of the JOBS program, and even prior to JOBS under the WIN program, although training programs have often discouraged women from starting family child care homes because of the low pay and many barriers to creating a viable business. Through Head Start and JOBS, some women have been trained to work in child care centers, which requires a certain amount of formal education and hands-on training. Head Start has been successful in training many parents, most of whom are AFDC recipients, to receive the Child Development Associate certificate, a competency-based credential for teaching in early childhood programs.

Today, however, with increased emphasis on moving welfare mothers to work in large numbers, new proposals to recruit child care providers often look less like job training opportunities than "cattle calls" to quickly increase the supply of care for children whose parents need to meet anticipated work requirements. At their worst, these proposals envision a signup sheet or registry in the welfare office where women who need to meet their own work requirements can "volunteer" to provide child care and women who need care are directed to find willing providers. Most likely, these providers will not be screened in any way, will not become regulated, and will thus receive the lower reimbursement rates that most states pay for regulation-exempt care[1], and may lose out on benefits such as training, participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the possibility of creating a long-term, viable career.

[1] Regulation-exempt care is child care that is legally not required to be licensed or regulated by the state.

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This type of proposal is virtually untried and raises many concerns about the quality of care that children will receive, the viability of regulation-exempt family child care as a career for these women, and the responsibility and liability of state agencies that administer such "programs."

### WHY ALL THE CONCERN?

To many, recruiting welfare recipients to work in family child care makes eminent sense. Mothers need job opportunities, and children need care while their mothers work. Compared to many career possibilities for poorly educated women who may have few other job prospects, child care work can be rewarding and meaningful, can teach women valuable entrepreneurial and parenting skills, and may afford them a way to remain at home with their own children. Thus, for welfare recipients who show an aptitude and desire for it, child care work may be the key to a satisfying career.

However, as anyone who has worked with children knows, child care is demanding, exhausting, and low-paying work. Turnover in both family child care and in child care centers is high, averaging 30 to 40 percent per year, due in large part, to poverty-level wages and the lack of health benefits. (13) Many people who enter the field because of a true love for the work are forced to leave because they simply cannot afford to remain. Welfare recipients who enter the field out of fear that they will lose their cash assistance, or because they cannot find another job, may not exhibit the professional qualities necessary to provide a healthy, nurturing environment for the children they care for, and a service that enables their clients to work. Of great concern, as well, is that while states consider recruiting welfare recipients to provide regulation-exempt family child care to meet the demand for care of other recipients' children, many states are simultaneously considering cutting the reimbursement rate paid to exempt providers—the same providers that would rely on these subsidies to earn a living wage.

Moreover, the nature of some proposals defies common sense. Some states are considering "share" arrangements, in which, as a condition of receiving cash assistance, recipients must agree to care for each others' children. Without creating viable career opportunities for these women, such proposals create the illogical result that recipients can receive aid for staying home and caring for children—as long as they are not their own. Such a policy, based on the notion that caregivers are fungible and that caring for one's own children is not worthy work, can seriously impact the consistency of care that young children need in their early years and can leave mothers with no job skills or career options with which to move towards self-sufficiency.

## WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Child care is not simply a place where parents can leave their children while they work. Child care must be safe and enriching to promote children's healthy development, and it must be stable to enable parents to remain in the workforce. Particularly for low-income families, the impact of child care arrangements can be dramatic.

Abundant research demonstrates the positive impacts of quality child care on young children. (9)(12)(15) Quality early childhood programs can lead to better school achievement, fewer school dropouts, and later on, a better employment record and less criminal behavior. "At risk" children in particular can benefit from high quality child care, by improving their verbal abilities and decreasing problem behaviors.

For low-income parents who are trying to move toward self-sufficiency, the availability of stable and safe child care can play a crucial role in their ability to obtain and maintain a job. (16) Child care by unregulated providers is typically more unstable and unreliable than that by regulated providers, who tend to perceive child care as their profession. Parents who use in-home or regulation-exempt care more frequently miss work because of a breakdown in their child care arrangements. Studies have shown that low-income parents would choose stable, licensed or center-based care if they could; for many, however, the only affordable option is unstable or poor quality care that may detrimentally impact both their ability to work and their children's healthy development.

## WHAT CAN STATES DO WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THIS ISSUE?

States should embark upon a plan to recruit welfare mothers as child care providers with as much information as possible, and with a twofold goal in mind.

First, poor children receive good quality child care, which is essential for their healthy development and later success in school and in the workplace.

Second, steps should be taken to ensure that providers can succeed in the child care field. To do so, providers should be prepared for and knowledgeable about the demands and realities of the work of child care, should want to do the work, and should receive the supports that have been shown to enhance providers' ability to competently perform their work.

In addition, states should be aware of the following issues and barriers that may adversely affect both providers' ability to succeed in the field and the quality of care that young children receive.

### DESIRE AND APTITUDE FOR CHILD CARE WORK

A recent study entitled "The Study of Family Child Care and Relative Care" has shown that child care providers who enter the field because of a professional interest in the work consistently provide better quality care than those who simply feel compelled to help out a friend or neighbor or earn a little extra money. (14) Known as "intentionality," this characteristic is found in providers who offer more sensitive, more responsive, and overall better quality care.

Programs that have recruited welfare mothers to work as child care providers have consistently found that those women who truly love and want to care for children succeed more often than those who enter the field for other reasons.

### FAMILY SUPPORTS FOR PROVIDER

Women who care for the children of others must also arrange for care for their own children. If they provide family child care, their children will likely count in their capacity requirements, limiting the number of fee-paying children for whom they can care. In addition, family child care providers earn extremely low wages and cannot expect to receive unemployment insurance, social security, workers' compensation, sick leave, or disability protections. Significantly, providers also cannot expect to be able to purchase medical insurance and often must rely on Medicaid for their own and for their families' health care needs.

### PROFESSIONALISM OF THE PROVIDER AND RELATIONSHIP TO PARENTS

Among the unique qualities of family child care is the informal and personal nature of relations between parent and provider. One consequence of this familiarity, however, may be a lack of structure to the relationship. Providers may work long hours or overextend themselves without compensation, in order to help out a friend or relative, and care for children even when too tired or unable to do so safely. Also, providers may not insist on payment when a parent is financially strapped, leaving the low-income provider unable to meet her own needs. On the other hand, parents may feel uncomfortable expressing their concerns about the type or quality of care their children receive, knowing that the provider is a close friend or a relative.

**In the Families** and Work Institute study, researchers found that providers who offered good quality care did not consider their work temporary and they perceived child care as their chosen occupation. Moreover, "intentional" providers sought professional training, planned more activities for children, and formed relationships with other providers, all of which increase providers' sensitivity toward children and thus the quality of care they provide. (14)

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## BARRIERS AND DISINCENTIVES TO CHILD CARE AS A WORK OPPORTUNITY

### CHILD CARE AS A VIABLE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Child care providers can expect to receive extremely low pay, especially if they provide regulation-exempt family child care for subsidized clients. Low-income family child care providers earn an average of $12,000 per year nationwide, according to a study by Wheelock College (8), and a recent study of family child care providers in Wisconsin showed that regulation-exempt providers[2] earned a net income of $5,000 per year. (17) In California, regulation-exempt providers receive reimbursements as low as $1.69 per hour.

The potential earnings of providers are affected by the limited incomes of the families they serve. Often residents of low-income neighborhoods do not want their children cared for near home if they can afford the tuition in a better, safer neighborhood. The clients of exempt providers are typically those who cannot afford market tuition rates and are dependent on government subsidy rates, which are usually less than the market rate, and are often late, sporadic, and interrupted as parents' work situations change. Many residents of low-income neighborhoods do not work or work sporadically, leaving providers unable to count on stable income.

### LACK OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PROVIDERS

Lack of training opportunities, information, and contact with others in the field are often impediments to improving the quality of care and can lead to the failure of a family child care business. Many low-income providers also lack the capital to invest in basic necessities of caregiving, such as cribs, toys, and educational materials, as well as nutritious food and safety devices. Without adequate supports, providers may live and work in isolation, marginalized in the welfare system, in their field, and in their daily lives. Stress and economics have been cited as the most frequent reasons why family child care providers leave their work. (5) (17)

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[2] Providers surveyed are exempt from most licensing requirements but must meet minimal certification requirements in order to serve subsidized children.

### IMPEDIMENTS RELATED TO SMALL BUSINESS OPERATION

The turnover for family child care averages up to 40 percent per year. (5) (13) As a small business, family child care faces not only the poor odds of success of any small business, but also the unique challenges of this type of venture. Many welfare recipients have little work history or education, which would make the task of becoming the sole proprietor of a business a daunting one. Such an independent career involves new responsibilities that may include opening a bank account for the first time, saving for and paying quarterly taxes, and managing a budget on a limited and unsteady income. Welfare recipients are often unable to obtain loans to pay for start-up costs, including equipment and fees. On top of adjusting to a new career, implementing new skills in child care, and adequately meeting family responsibilities, providers face enormous pressures as they work to get their businesses off the ground.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY CONDITIONS OF HOMES

Many homes in low-income neighborhoods are not suitable for group child care and may not be able to meet funding and/or regulatory health and safety standards. (6) The indoor areas may not be designed for groups of young children and may contain hazardous conditions. City apartments may be crowded, without adequate outdoor play areas. Rural areas may also contain outdoor hazards such as machinery, animals, or unfenced creeks. Low-income providers may not have the means, and their landlords may not be willing, to repair serious dangers such as exposed heaters; unprotected windows; peeling paint; lack of window guards; and lead in paint, in water in old pipes, and in soils near freeways.

Although official HUD policy is to allow family child care in public housing, it can create a host of unique problems, including health and safety concerns, as well as reluctance of housing authorities to allow family child care due to liability or other concerns.

**In a** Massachusetts pilot project, students in a training program to become licensed as family child care providers faced poverty-related housing barriers to licensing. These included peeling paint outdoors and broken fencing that a landlord did not repair promptly, which delayed the licensing process.

### INABILITY TO PASS BACKGROUND CHECKS

With more and more states requiring child care providers (both regulated and exempt) to undergo criminal and child abuse background checks, failure of the provider or other residents in her home to be cleared in a reasonable search will and should prevent her from providing child care. In a Minnesota project to recruit and train low-income women as family child care providers, almost 14 percent of providers were screened out because they or residents in their homes failed a background check.

### ZONING AND LANDLORDS

Local zoning ordinances that prohibit home businesses can prevent family child care providers from operating, particularly in

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neighborhoods with multi-family housing, where neighbors are likely to oppose such an enterprise. In several states, such as California and New Jersey, laws void zoning ordinances that prohibit family child care, but usually only if the program is regulated by the state. In addition, absent laws that prohibit such restrictions, providers may also confront landlords who oppose family child care, or who require prohibitively costly liability insurance.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Almost 60 percent of women on welfare are victims of domestic violence, which can make the prospect of a home business extremely undesirable. Some of these women do not have stable homes, as they frequently leave their homes and stay with friends or relatives for periods of time. For many, working in the home also does not offer them a potential way out of their situations, as neither shelter nor livelihood offer support or protection necessary to separate from an abusive partner. Moreover, victims of domestic violence may not be emotionally or physically ready to take on the responsibilities of caring for groups of children and running a business; they may need counseling in order to become job ready. Without time to extricate themselves from an abusive situation and help to recover from the trauma, women faced with the challenges of family child care will likely not succeed. (10)

## EFFECTIVE SUPPORTS FOR PROVIDERS

**The many complex obstacles** to recruitment of welfare recipients as family child care providers—from the suitability of many recipients to work in the field to common poverty-related barriers—may present insurmountable challenges to successful implementation of this type of proposal. Nevertheless, many states will consider this idea as a solution to increasing the supply of care and finding "worthy" work opportunities for welfare recipients. This section presents important supports that should be provided to participants in any recruitment program. These recommendations have been culled from programs that have attempted to create successful family child care training programs—some are supports that have helped providers to succeed and some are lessons that these programs have learned in the process.

### TRAINING

Adequate training is critical to ensuring that children receive quality care and that providers are able to handle the challenges of family child care. A recent study by the Families and Work Institute of family day care training programs in three states found that with a minimal 18-36 hours of training, providers showed greater attachment to the children; their income tax reporting increased; they showed greater commitment to their work by taking advantage of additional training opportunities including the Child Care Food Program training, child development courses, and family child care association workshops; and they had more outside involvement with the child care field. As a result, the global quality of the care they provided improved. (2)

Training efforts for providers recruited through the welfare system should be connected and coordinated with training efforts at the state level by those in the child care community. Training programs should include:

- specific content related to the care and development of young children, appropriate for the developmental needs of the children served and the type of setting, and targeted toward improving basic academic and business skills;
- information on licensing requirements, accessing subsidies, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and other resources;

- diverse training methods to meet the needs of multicultural and multilingual trainees; and
- substantial practical experience in an apprentice role, peer support, and mentors from similar backgrounds.

### START-UP FUNDS

Programs can provide much needed assistance in the form of money for licensing or certification application fees, background checks, toys and equipment for feeding and napping a group of children, business licenses, use permits, etc. Inexpensive yet critical supports can also include the purchase of fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, door and cabinet locks, and first aid kits. Financial assistance to upgrade homes to meet licensing and funding requirements will also enable many providers to operate. A relatively small investment by the state in such supports can go far to ensure that providers will remain in the field, thus maintaining the supply of care, and enabling low-income families (both providers and their clients) to continue working. (6)

Administering agencies can seek funding assistance from a variety of sources, including local employers, Facility Improvement Funds, and Community Development Block Grant funds. Agencies can also seek funds for quality improvement and training opportunities and provide incentives for participating providers. A directory of resources that providers can access independently should also be developed.

### DEVELOPMENT OF A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER NETWORK

Several programs have met with success in establishing provider networks, through which providers can access training and supports for their programs, as well as peer mentors, and through which providers can be referred a steady clientele. Networks are also a valuable way to decrease the isolation felt by many providers who work in their homes and to create friendships and informal contacts. A network can also serve to bridge the cultural and language barriers between the provider community and the organized system. The Families and Work Institute found that providers who are more involved with other providers are more likely to offer better quality care than those who work more independently. (3)

A program in Illinois run by the YWCA, which contracts with the agency that administers state and federal subsidies, also provides a rate differential for providers who belong to the network, which serves as an incentive to join and supplements the meager earnings of many family child care providers.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LICENSING OR REGULATION

There are many benefits to licensure or regulation for providers, the families they serve, and the state. For providers, regulation offers an entry into a professional field and the opportunity to receive benefits such as participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (in states without an alternative approval process), higher reimbursement rates, and zoning preemption in some states. Regulated providers are typically more sensitive and responsive to children (3), and must maintain minimum health and safety standards, which ensure basic protections for children.

The State of Oregon waives the $30 registration filing fee for providers whose family income is below 100 percent of the federal poverty level and who indicate that payment of the filing fee is a hardship.

### LINKS TO REFERRAL SERVICES

In order to sustain a viable business, providers must be able to maintain steady enrollment in their programs. An extremely important link could be forged through contractual arrangements with local child care resource and referral agencies which provide enhanced or targeted referral to welfare recipient child care providers and/or parents in need of child care. This link to referral services can benefit both providers needing to maintain a client base and parents who are seeking care. It could also help to identify a need for and supply of hard to find care, such as weekend, evening, or swing shift care.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT AS NEEDED

Financial support that recognizes the precarious financial position of newly operating family child care programs can go a long way toward stabilizing and ensuring the longevity of the program. In addition to income-stabilizing cash supplements, this financial support can include family health coverage, assistance paying for liability insurance, grants or loans for equipment, and help with child care expenses for providers' own children.

### HELP TO MARKET BUSINESS

Basic marketing skills and techniques can go a long way to building a steady clientele, especially as a new child care program gets off the ground. Administering agencies can help providers capture business at job training and job club sites and develop eye-catching flyers and business cards that providers and their clients can distribute.

### HELP TO DEVELOP CURRICULUM, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Family child care is a business that should operate in a professional manner, regardless of the personal and intimate nature of the

**Some county** welfare departments have considered performing a referral function internally, with the goal of matching AFDC parents with recipient providers, raising the concern that AFDC parents might be steered, either by coercion or by lack of complete information, into choosing such care. It is crucial that any such referral service operate on the fundamental principle of true parental choice, and not deprive parents of other appropriate child care options.

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enterprise. To reflect the professionalism that many providers have trained and strived for, and to encourage all providers and parents to treat child care as a profession, programs should have in place standard policies and procedures regarding payment, hours, vacations, and sick time. New providers will likely need guidance from more experienced providers or teachers knowledgeable about running a family child care program to develop these policies. In addition, providers should receive assistance from teachers trained in child development to plan daily activities and curriculum in order to create the most enriching environment for children and to use the busy provider's time efficiently.

### CONNECTIONS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

Domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse and neglect, poor nutrition, lack of access to health care, and violent neighborhoods are all commonly associated with life in poverty. Welfare recipients who are recruited to work in child care may face a variety of these issues and could benefit from easily accessible social services. Some supports can be incorporated into training programs, such as nutrition education and dealing with children's discipline and behavior problems. Other supports may require professional, individualized attention, such as helping a victim of domestic violence seek counseling. Providing these necessary services can not only help to make recruits job-ready, but can also alleviate some of the difficulties they face in their daily lives.

## OUTREACH TO MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

**Recruiting child care providers** from multicultural communities presents unique challenges, as well as opportunities to increase the supply of badly needed family child care and provide a career potential for women who otherwise might have language or cultural limitations in the marketplace. Family child care is also extremely attractive for parents, particularly in the Latino community, who often prefer care for their children in their native language in an informal setting that reflects their own cultural traditions and values. The availability of familiar care they can trust serves as an increased incentive to work, knowing there is adequate care for their children.

### CALIFORNIA

A multi-year project in California, known as El Comienzo (The Beginning), has successfully recruited over 300 new licensed Spanish-speaking family child care providers, who have space for over 1,000 children. The program began with the intent to recruit Spanish-speaking providers; however, it became apparent that "recruitment" needed to also include training and supports for existing providers to help them stay in business. El Comienzo focuses on one-on-one assistance and home visits. The individualized attention helps to build personal relationships and avoid generalizations about Latino culture, needs, and style. Orientation meetings were held at the local resource and referral agency, in Spanish, to ease the often intimidating process of education and application for licensing. The program also developed assessment tools, consumer and provider information packets, and regulations in Spanish. The written materials and training programs reflect the language and cultural needs of providers and the families they serve.

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The formal program concluded after two years; however, many of the project sites have continued to integrate multilingual and multicultural services as part of their mission. There is now a library of Spanish language child care materials, and translated licensing information and forms. The program has also instilled a sense of professionalism and pride to the Latina family child care community, as evidenced by the formation of several family child care associations. (14)

## LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

In 1988, the Coalition for a Better Acre began a community-based family child care training program in Lowell, Massachusetts. Designed to meet the demand for child care in the Spanish-speaking community and to create work opportunities within the community, the program began as classroom education in the evening for anyone who wanted to attend. While many trainees eventually became licensed, some simply learned valuable parenting and business skills.

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With increased attention on welfare reform, and the recognition that many dropouts from the training program were welfare recipients, in 1994, Acre Family Day Care altered its training structure to serve only AFDC recipients. The classes were reduced to a maximum of 12 participants and rescheduled from two evenings in the classroom per week to daytime sessions, eight hours in the classroom and 12 hours in child care internships. Sessions are conducted for Spanish speaking and Cambodian participants. The instructors and staff of the program almost entirely reflect the cultural makeup of the community, and classes are taught in the participants' own languages, which significantly helps to ease the insecurities that many participants feel.

The program focuses on one-on-one support to assist participants with the complexities of learning to run a small business, while trying to raise a family, learning a new set of skills, and dealing with language and cultural barriers. Once participants complete their training, most go on to become licensed. Acre operates a family day care system, with ongoing supports for providers, including monthly meetings and home visits, referrals, and assistance with marketing and setting up providers with the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Acre also provides loans for equipment and for the purchase of liability insurance and contracts with the state for subsidized slots.

Of the first group of 10 Spanish-speaking graduates, four are operating family child care programs (although one woman who has a child with a disability will only take in three additional children) and, with earnings of at least $1300 per month, have left AFDC. Three additional graduates who have recently become licensed and are not yet operating at capacity are still on AFDC. One of these women obtained a license and was then forced to move to a homeless shelter when her building was shut down because of health violations. She is waiting to move into a licensable apartment to begin operating her program. Two women have found other jobs and one dropped out of the program. Acre estimates that it pays providers about $18,000 per year for subsidized children, and some providers earn additional income from private clients and from participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

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## TRAINING WELFARE RECIPIENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN CHILD CARE CENTERS

**While the intended thrust** of this publication is to respond to proposals to recruit welfare recipients to provide regulated or exempt family child care, another (possibly more viable) child care career opportunity is to provide training to work in child care centers. Several programs nationwide have been developed, with varying degrees of success, depending on their program structure, recruitment and screening strategies, and administrative flexibility.

Many of the same principles and cautions apply equally to family child care and center work, such as the need for providers to be intentional in their approach and the limited economic opportunities in the child care field. However, child care centers can offer new providers an established workplace without the stress and responsibility of running a small business, as well as opportunities for advancement and increased salaries as providers gain more training and experience. New recruits should still be completely aware of the realities of child care work, including long hours, hard work, low pay, and emotional drain, but, the appeal of earning college credits and the potential of embarking on a career often serve as incentive for many women to succeed.

Two model programs are listed below, with brief highlights of their structure.

### PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

- PIC funded six month, full-time course, including college courses, classroom training and internships in centers.
- Funding contingent on placing graduates in jobs paying either $185 per week with benefits or $225 without benefits.
- Of 25 students recruited from welfare offices and volunteers, 18 completed the program and 11 have been placed so far.
- Success in the program really depends on true desire to work in child care and awareness about realities of work in the child care field.
- This government funded program was expensive (about $4000 per person), due to staffing and staff salary requirements, and paperwork.

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- Seven-year-old program funded by the State of Massachusetts, MA Department of Education, student financial aid (Pell Grants), and in-kind support from Wheelock College.
- Program includes rigorous screening for candidates seeking to enter college and become teachers of young children on a career development path.
- Eighty percent of participants are on AFDC, many recruited through welfare offices, flyers, and word of mouth for nine month, 28 hour per week program involving 5 college courses and field internship training resulting in teacher/lead teacher certification through the MA Office for Children.
- Program has placed 90 percent of its 113 graduates in child care centers, earning an average of $8-10 per hour and benefits.
- An increasing number of students continue on with college courses after graduating from the CCCP, which is in keeping with program goals.

## EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS TO RECRUIT AFDC RECIPIENTS AS CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

### PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Funded by the Pew Charitable Trust, the YMCA of Philadelphia & Vicinity began a home child care network four years ago to provide support for public assistance recipients or unemployed persons to provide family child care. Today, 25 providers citywide, recruited through radio advertisements and PSA's, belong to the network. These providers receive a variety of benefits from the YMCA, including cribs, playpens, fire extinguishers, toys, and liability insurance. In exchange, providers must maintain a level of quality of care and can receive training and supportive services from the YMCA program, and can use the well known Y name. All providers must become licensed, with fees of up to $785 paid for by the YMCA. Although state law allows small family child care providers to care for up to six children, a Philadelphia zoning ordinance requires a variance to care for more than four children. Most providers want to care for the maximum allowed by the State and pay the $200 variance fee out of pocket.

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The support network is staffed by a Project Director, who is always available for questions and assistance. The network schedules meetings every other Saturday, in which providers receive the training required for licensure and can develop informal networks. The YMCA also holds regular providers' nights out, in which providers can swim or meet socially at the Y facility.

Many of the providers who have contracts with the YMCA have been able to succeed in their businesses because of their passion about their work and their willingness to work hard and be flexible. Some providers had been operating underground previously and were happy to be able to work as licensed providers, with benefits such as participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and important supports such as insurance and training. Many provide odd-hours care and some refuse to take subsidies, preferring to accept what parents can pay up front, rather than negotiating the complicated system of paperwork and reimbursements that accompany state subsidies. Many of the providers have been able to leave AFDC, although most still rely on Medicaid for health insurance or remain uninsured. The program serves primarily low-income families at costs which are one-half to one-third of center fees.

Because the program is run through the YMCA, ongoing costs for the program are minimal. The only designated staff person is the Project Director and community resources are maximized. Start up costs are estimated at $2000 per provider.

## NEW JERSEY

In 1988, the State of New Jersey received a federal waiver to create 600 slots for AFDC recipients to work as family child care providers. The state accepts volunteers who choose family child care as a JOBS option. Providers must meet state registration requirements which include: six hours of training, a personal background check with the state child abuse registry, and a home inspection. The Department of Family Development pays the $25 registration fee. Once registered, providers can care for five children in addition to their own and they receive a 50 percent income disregard for one year. The State contracts with sponsoring organizations in each county, usually the resource and referral agency, to register homes and train and monitor providers. The estimated cost to register each home is approximately $656.

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The State has found that in most counties, the program is underutilized for several reasons. Due to inconsistent enrollment, providers' income fluctuated a great deal, especially after the one-year income disregard expired. Others who managed to leave AFDC turned to other types of work, presumably with health and other fringe benefits. In comparison to these JOBS program participants, the State found that non-AFDC family child care providers were more likely to be middle-income, with family child care as a second source of family income.

The Governor has recently unveiled New Jersey's welfare reform plan, which includes a similar program to recruit welfare mothers to become registered family child care providers. Although details of the anticipated county-run program are not yet known, it is hoped that with careful screening of providers and enhanced technical assistance, the program will see positive results.

## CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

The Child Care Resource Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, developed a program to train AFDC recipients to become licensed family child care providers. The training involves an intensive 13 week course in which women can study 25 hours per week to learn beginning skills in child care work. The students participate in classroom activities three days per week and in "mentoring" sites with

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experienced child care providers or teachers two days per week. The curriculum focuses on three areas: knowing the requirements of operating a family child care business; child development and activity planning for mixed-age groups; and professional behavior skills. The pilot project is funded through the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance with a grant to a regional job training organization and a subcontract to CCRC.

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In June 1995, CCRC in-house project evaluators reviewed four different areas. In response to the training format, evaluators found that trainees' excellent attendance in the classroom component indicated a real desire to learn. All trainees responded positively to the hands-on activities, the personal bonding, and the adult communication elements, which reflects the need for ways to combat the isolation felt by welfare mothers and child care providers alike.

Trainees were also evaluated on their mastery of the course objectives in the classroom in areas such as writing skills, retention of nutrition facts, budgeting for meals, speaking and group skills, resume preparation, recordkeeping, equipment purchasing, CPR, first aid, and home safety objectives. All of these skills proved challenging for trainees, perhaps indicating a need for continuing support as issues arise. The evaluation of trainees' application of their course learning in a work setting revealed that while they were willing and able to make improvements in their homes, many faced licensing barriers due to the failure of landlords to promptly make repairs and other poverty-related personal problems, such as past due phone bills or failure to pass background checks.

Finally, the evaluators looked at the goal of financial self-sufficiency through self employment in family child care and determined that, while a fair evaluation can only be made after one to three years, low state reimbursement rates, combined with health insurance costs, indicate that self-sufficiency may be an unattainable goal for these families.

At the completion of the program, CCRC pays for the $75 licensing application fee and one year of liability insurance ($200), and provides each participant with $500 for home improvements and/or toys and equipment. The start-up costs total approximately $1000 for each new provider, including the small stipend paid to mentors who train participants in their homes and provide follow-up support for six months.

To date, the six participants in the program have all achieved a family child care license and five are active providers (one participant moved out of state). They are all interested in affiliating with a family child care system in order to receive professional training and support. However, all five remain on AFDC. Three will lose AFDC eligibility soon, and they feel extremely insecure because of unsteady enrollment, uneven earnings, and loss of medical insurance. The

Center is about to start its second training session with room for 16 participants. About 20 percent of applicants were screened out because of housing problems—either their landlords refused to allow family child care in their home or their homes were not licensable due to lack of emergency egress or insufficient square footage.

## HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

Three years ago, the Virginia Department of Social Services began a program with a two-fold goal—to increase the quality and supply of child care for public assistance recipients and to increase the parenting skills of participants. Using Child Care and Development Block Grant funds, they devised a program which included a nurturing program for parents of children 0-1 year old, with curriculum in child care standards and safety, information on immunizations, disease, the child care food program, fire safety, and CPR. The program also contains sessions on music and movement, and story telling. While preparing participants with basic knowledge necessary to provide child care, those who opt not to work in the field still receive valuable parent education. During the 4 1/2 hour per day, 6 week program, approximately 18 participants complete three evaluations. At the end, successful participants graduate in a ceremony attended by friends and family.

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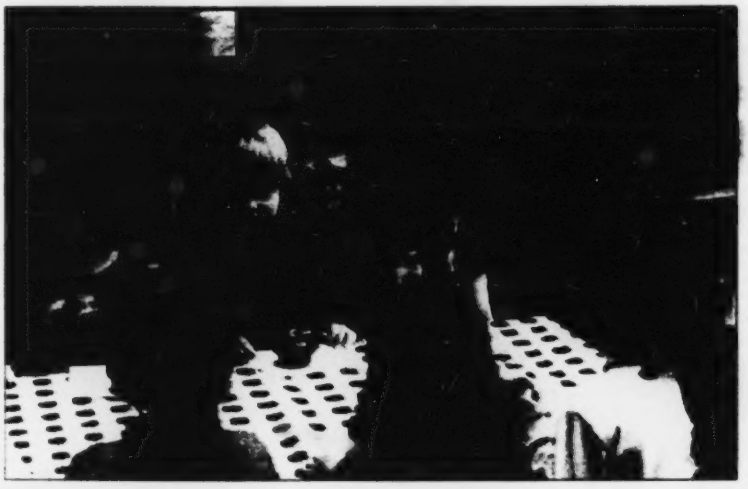
The program qualifies as a JOBS activity, and many of the participants in the program are self-referrals, while some are referred by their caseworkers. During the first class, a JOBS worker assists in completing paperwork and explains JOBS requirements. At the end of the program, participants must complete an 80 hour practicum, either caring for the children of parents in the next class or working in a child care center. Many find placements in non-profit child care centers, where they can bring their own children. For those who wish to start family child care programs, the program pays for their certification fee and background checks. They also receive a start-up kit with folders to maintain a file for each child, three puzzles, a first aid kit, and a fire extinguisher. Those who enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food program receive a bag of groceries to assist with the first month's menus.

## CONCLUSION

**Relying exclusively** on welfare recipients to build a supply of child care to meet a burgeoning need does not make wise policy, as shown by the many impediments faced by even the most well-intentioned programs. Programs that include careful screening, significant investments in training and ongoing supports, and financial assistance for licensing, home improvement, and insurance can enable qualified providers to overcome many of the barriers they might face. The most successful efforts thus far have been extremely labor intensive, with small groups of participants, mentoring opportunities, and individualized support, as well as a significant public and private investment. Nevertheless, even for those providers who complete comprehensive training programs, obtain a license, and operate a thriving family child care program, "success" may mean poverty-level earnings with no benefits, demanding work, and the inability to become independent of the welfare system. As demonstrated in Massachusetts, even providers who are operating at capacity are either still on AFDC or are facing imminent termination of benefits and the insecurities of unstable income and no health insurance.



As a solution to increasing the supply of child care and creating work opportunities, recruiting welfare recipients to work as family child care providers may backfire for several reasons. First, providers who may be subject to time limits for cash assistance may find themselves operating a business and still unable to support themselves once cash aid ends. Or, providers who see family child care as a futile career path may leave the field, leaving themselves without employment prospects as their time-limited benefits end. Second, the implications of failed family child care programs can be far-reaching. For children who may have formed a relationship with their provider, a disruption in care could be detrimental. For the parents of these children, loss of the provider on whom they rely could derail their own self-sufficiency efforts. Third, any such program requires an investment in time and money by the state. While well designed programs can enable certain recipients to flourish in the child care field, it is likely that many will

not sustain a business. In that case, the state will have wasted its investment and failed to create either work opportunities or child care slots.

In light of the complex issues involved in recruiting welfare recipients to work in child care, we encourage policymakers who are contemplating this type of proposal to design a program that fits with states' work requirements and with the needs of families. For instance, mothers with children under one year may want to care for one other infant in order to stay home with their own child, earn additional income, and receive training that they could apply to either a future family child care business or their own parenting. Mothers with school-age children may be interested in family child care in order to be home when their children finish school, particularly if they have concerns about the safety of their neighborhood. Many mothers who receive welfare may show aptitude for the work and may succeed in the field, depending on their motivations.

When designed with care and thought, and with an adequate fiscal investment, some initiatives, as highlighted in this publication, can provide a rewarding yet challenging career for such individuals. However, this policy is certainly not a cure-all for the shortage of jobs and child care, and should be embarked upon only with great caution.

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Working For Change

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## CHILD CARE LAW CENTER

The Child Care Law Center is a nonprofit legal services organization dedicated to improving and expanding child care services to low-income families and the providers who serve them.

Since 1978, the Child Care Law Center has provided legal support to the child care community by providing legal services to child care programs, by serving as a legal services support center, and through training and public education. As a nonprofit legal services organization, we use legal tools and resources to foster the development and maintenance of high quality child care services throughout the country. The Child Care Law Center works to support and implement public policy initiatives at all levels of government which assist families in meeting their child care needs and child care programs in delivering high quality services.

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**Others in the *Working For Change* series**

**"Helping Families Work: Alternatives to the Child Care Disregard"** features an analysis of the problems with the child care disregard as a payment mechanism as well as recommendations for improving child care subsidies for families who work and receive AFDC.

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